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INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0822
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0871
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 2372
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1231
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 0224
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHDS/USMISSION USAU ADDIS ABABA

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 000657

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MR](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: A PESSIMISTIC ALGERIAN OUTLOOK ON MAURITANIA

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Dennis Hankins for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Departing Algerian Ambassador Rachid Chakib Kaid (protect throughout) provided Charge a pessimistic outlook on Mauritania's political prospects in the coming year. Kaid, who has served in Mauritania for five years, said he had witnessed the roller-coaster of recurring coups. He had hoped to see stability and development set in under President Abdallahi, but the August 2008 coup had proved that hope to be short-lived. Kaid has told his replacement to expect continued instability as he does not have an optimistic view of President Aziz' future.

¶2. (C) The Algerian Ambassador saw Aziz in an extremely difficult place. The country has very little money and the prospects for significant development and investment funds are years off at best. Aziz' populist and traditional political campaign made things worse because he raised mass expectations with promises he can't keep and made political promises to more traditional leaders than he can take care of. Aziz' successful transition from "coup leader" to "constitutional leader" has, unfortunately, set the precedent for some future military or security element to push him aside if they are displeased with his performance. Charge responded that we agree Aziz' is in a difficult economic position -- a position that would have faced any of the presidential contenders in the July elections -- but we are cautioning opposition politicians not to relish the idea of a new coup against Aziz. As conditions in Guinea have shown, Mauritania could do far worse than Aziz. Kaid said he hoped Aziz would be able to get the economy going and create political stability -- two conditions he saw a vital for Algerian security interests. He just wasn't confident.

¶3. (C) Kaid was more positive when discussing Mauritania's commitment to combating terrorism. When he first arrived in Nouakchott, Mauritania dismissed any possibility of domestic radicalization and saw the risk posed by Al Qaeda as somewhat remote. The 2005 Lemghetty attack began to change attitudes and, after the multiple terrorist attacks of 2007 - 2009, the Mauritania now appear truly committed to taking on AQIM and cognizant of their own internal radicalization problem. Kaid saw Mauritanian engagement in Algiers' four-way counter-terrorism coordination activities as positive, but he viewed close Mauritanian-Malian cooperation as unlikely since, "Aziz still resents that the Malians openly condemned the coup and the Malians are sure he provided material support to the Tuareg in retaliation."

¶4. (C) Kaid lamented that broad Maghrebian cooperation remains hampered. While technical issues can be addressed

within the Arab Maghreb Union, "we can have no real cooperation until we can have regular Head-of-State summits" which remains impossible because of Western Sahara. He added that the Libyans had failed to capitalize on their simultaneous leadership of the African Union, CENSAD, AMU, General Assembly, and seat on the Security Council but added, "any country would be challenged doing any of these jobs well -- doing them all together is impossible."

HANKINS